

A photograph of two workers in a factory setting. A man in a blue hard hat and a yellow safety vest is seated in an ergonomic chair, operating a control panel. A woman in a white hard hat stands beside him, looking at a tablet. In the background, there is a large blue industrial machine with orange and black safety stripes. The scene is brightly lit with overhead industrial lights.

CAPE - Youth

CENTER FOR ADVANCING POLICY
ON EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH

Opening Doors: Empowering the Disability Talent Pipeline through Apprenticeships

Thursday, March 26, 2026

The Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth

The Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth seeks to improve employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities (Y&YAD) by helping states enhance their youth service delivery and workforce systems.

CAPE-Youth Partners

The Center is a consortium led by The Council of State Governments and includes the K. Lisa Yang and Hock E. Tan Institute on Employment and Disability at Cornell University, the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University, and the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals.

The Center is fully funded by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) in the amount of \$7.5 million under Cooperative Agreement No. 23475OD000001-01-00. This item does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Technical Assistance

CAPE-Youth provides policymakers and workforce development professionals with **no-cost technical assistance (TA)**:

1. **Universal:** Implementing the Guideposts for Success.
 - Ongoing activities and deliverables, such as publications, webinars, and emerging research.
2. **Targeted:** Policy development and best practices.
 - Research requests, virtual meetings, and in-person state visits to support goals.
3. **Intensive:** Partnership and collaboration.
 - Specific requests for professional development to review, devise, and/or develop internal structures and evaluate ongoing needs.

*Do you need
technical assistance?*



Objectives

1. Understand the **value of apprenticeships** for youth and young adults with disabilities (Y&YAD)
2. Explore **policy recommendations to increase the participation of Y&YAD** in apprenticeship programs
3. Learn from **state model programs** that sustainably leverage partnerships to support the success of Y&YAD *and* employers in apprenticeships

What Are Apprenticeships?

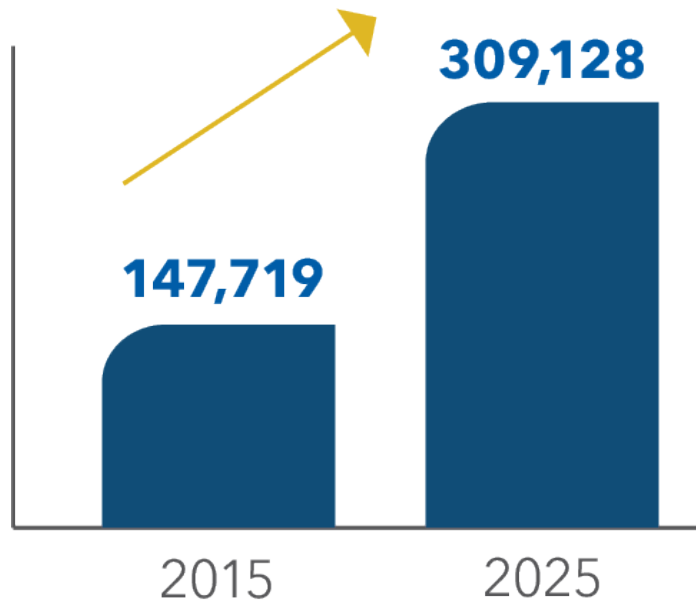
Apprenticeships are industry-driven, high-quality career pathways through which individuals obtain **paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable credential.**



Youth Apprenticeships: A Decade of Growth

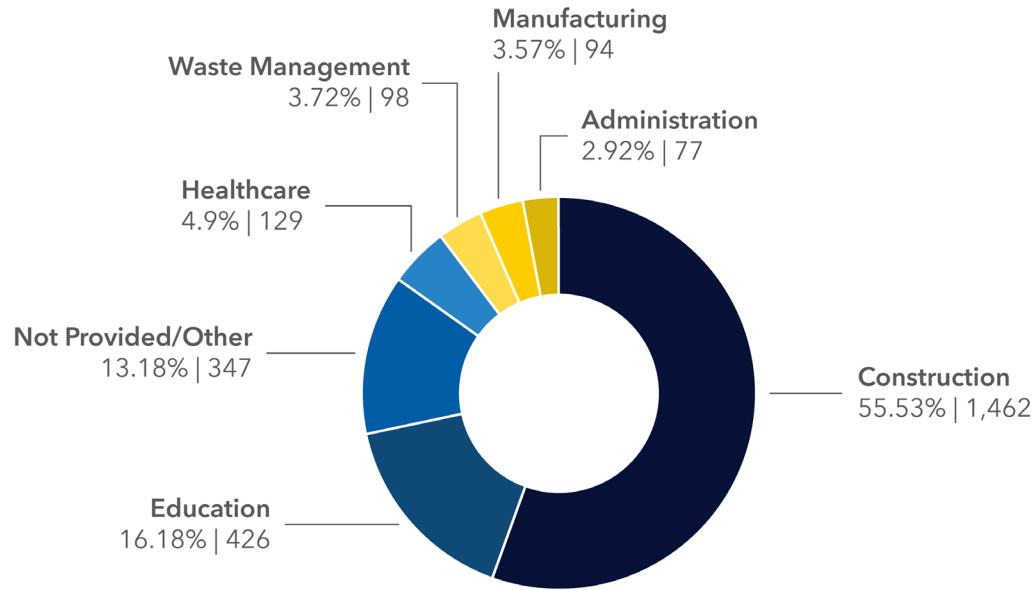
- Participants age 16–24
- Components:
 - Paid on-the-job training
 - Related instruction (aligned with high school and postsecondary instruction)
 - Credential attainment
 - Pre-apprenticeship opportunities
 - Mentorship
 - Supportive services

Youth Apprenticeship Participation
Doubled from 2015 to 2025



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship.
Apprentices by state dashboard. Retrieved January 2026.

Youth Apprentices with Disabilities by Industry, 2025

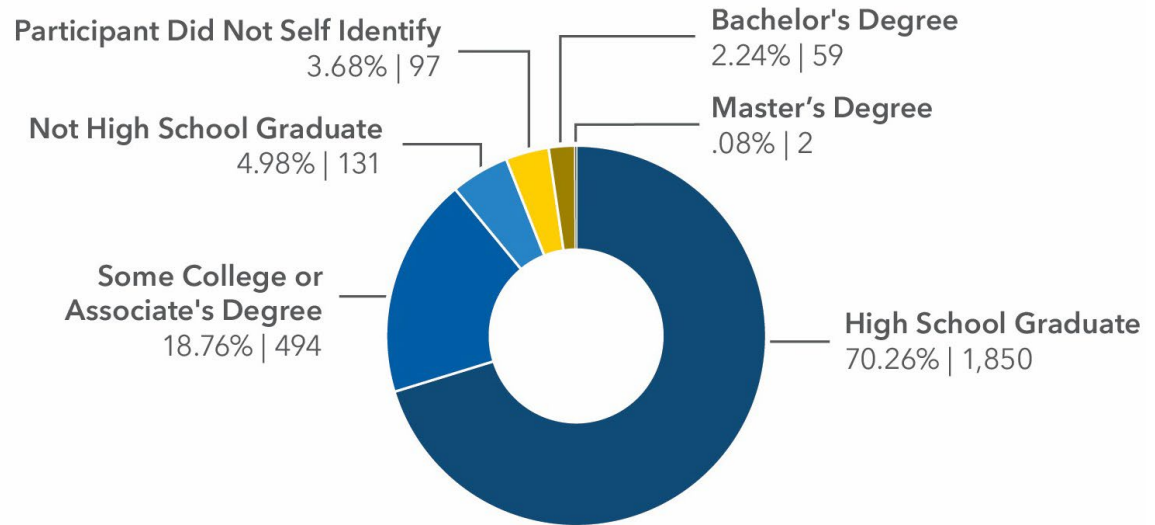


Construction is the most popular industry among youth apprentices with disabilities, meaning there is growth potential across other sectors.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship.
Apprentices by state dashboard. Retrieved January 2026.

Youth Apprentices with Disabilities by Education Level, 2025

Most youth apprentices with disabilities enter programs with a high school diploma, GED, or completion certificate.



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship.
Apprentices by state dashboard. Retrieved January 2026.

Apprenticeship Mutually Benefits Employers and Y&YAD

Y&YAD apprentices gain:

- Paid work experience
- Hands-on classroom instruction
- Portable, industry-recognized credentials
- Increased self-confidence and career identity
- Employer networking
- Mentorship

Employers gain:

- Entry-level employees with relevant skills training and/or industry-recognized credentials or certification(s)
- Increased employee retention
- Positive return on investment
- Decreased skills gap
- Improved productivity and dependability
- Improved workplace culture

Policy Levers to Expand Apprenticeships to Y&YAD

1

Leverage Incentives & Funding

Align WIOA, Perkins V, and federal grants to expand access for Y&YAD

2

Strengthen Vocational Rehabilitation Partnerships

Establish VR-apprenticeship MOUs with shared data and braided funding

3

Communicate Y&YAD's Value to Employers

Share return-on-investment and success stories through employer outreach

1

**Leverage federal funding and state incentives
to expand apprenticeship program offerings**

Federal Investments Create Multiple Funding Pathways for Youth Apprenticeship

- Over \$1 billion since 2015 for Youth Apprenticeship
- Workforce Development Funds — Pell Grants, Federal Work Study
- Apprenticeship Inclusion Models (AIM)
- Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship (PIA)
- [Future Ready Apprenticeship Center](#), a national hub funded by USDOL designed to help states strengthen and scale Registered Apprenticeship opportunities for young people ages 16–24. Selected states will receive \$200,000 over 31 months, along with customized TA.
- [USDOL announces \\$145 million in funds supporting performance-based Registered Apprenticeship expansion across key industry sectors.](#)

State Funding Supports Y&YAD in Accessing Apprenticeships

- Employer tax credits and tuition supports
- Private partners
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Perkins V (Career and Technical Education)
- State Apprenticeship Expansion Funds
- Governors Youth Apprenticeship Program



Strengthen collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and state apprenticeship partners

Disability-Serving Partners for Apprenticeship

Successful youth apprenticeship systems rely on coordinated action across partners.

- Vocational Rehabilitation
- WIOA Title I Services
- Developmental Disabilities Agencies
- Mental Health/Behavioral Health Agencies
- Employment Networks (Ticket to Work Program)
- Schools/Higher Education Entities
- State and Local Education Agencies



Policy Levers to Strengthen Partnership

- Shared vision for implementation and sustainability
- Memorandums of Understanding/Agreement
- Data sharing and performance outcomes
- Braiding, blending, and sequencing at all levels:
 - Funding
 - Staffing
 - Service delivery

Vocational Rehabilitation and Youth Apprenticeship



Aline Jackson-Diggs

Employment Consultant

Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)

VA DARS Questions

- Can you walk us through the process of a client of VA DARS interested in an apprenticeship, from referral to program completion?
- What factors make the approach you outlined result in successful employment outcomes for Y&YAD?
- What is the best way for apprenticeship programs to bring VR in as an apprenticeship partner?



Communicate the value of apprentices with disabilities to employers and industry stakeholders

Employer-Led Championing of Y&YAD in Apprenticeship



Ted Brown

Retired Vice President
Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana

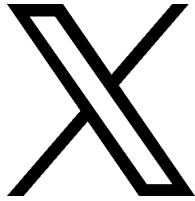
Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana Questions

- Can you provide an overview of the Inclusive Talent Apprenticeship Program?
- How have you seen this apprenticeship benefit Y&YAD?
- What impact has this program had on the company culture and processes of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana?

Guest Speaker Q&A

In your experience, what strategies are effective in recruiting employers and easing concerns about hiring apprentices with disabilities?

Stay Connected with CAPE-Youth



@CSG_CAPEYouth



@CAPE-Youth



@CAPEYouth

Want to know more about CAPE-Youth?

Please contact info@capeyouth.org.

Resources

- Office of Apprenticeship, U.S. Department of Labor
 - [Universal outreach tool](#)
 - [State-by-state tax credits and tuition support](#)
- ODEP Technical Assistance Centers
 - [Employer Assistance and Resource Network \(EARN\) webinar](#)
 - [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\) disclosure resources](#)
- For Apprenticeship Sponsors
 - [Registered Apprenticeship Centers for Excellence](#)